

MONOLINGUAL PARENTS' ROLE IN CHILDREN'S SECOND LANGUAGE (ENGLISH)
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH READING IN THEIR HOME LANGUAGE

Presented to
The Graduate Program
of
Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfilment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

by
Yury Marcela Arango Lopez

November 2022

Advisor: Dr. Michelle Plaisance

Abstract

In the XXI century, with technological inventions, learning to read and write is mandatory for communication in order to survive this globalized world. Children are taught to read since they start the academic process in kindergarten, which is why all children are sent to school. Parents need to be active participants in children's academic development. In other words, their support is vital to help children reach their academic goals. Many parents immigrate to the United States to pursue a dream and a better life for their families. Most parents do not know English and find it difficult to help their children with school assignments. What they do not know is that they can contribute to their children's success at school by teaching them to read in their home language, so their role in children's second language literacy is vital because they have the most incredible opportunity to build their children's literacy skills and awareness of their first language by reading to them. Also, parents can develop oral skills that will help children build literacy. It is also necessary to help students grow and expand their imagination as well as help them develop critical thinking to be more analytical and give another perspective of the world surrounding them. When parents read to their children by creating a twenty-minute daily reading routine and teaching the sounds of the letters in their home language, they are also building a platform for literacy skills in the second language (English) because they know a language they understand and will use it as a guide. Reading in their first language is essential because it prepares children to acquire the skills to develop literacy in English, their second language.

Dedication

I first dedicate this thesis to God, who has supported, guided, strengthened, and blessed me through many dark moments. To my lovely husband, Juan Carlos, who loved me unconditionally and encouraged me to continue pursuing my professional goals. To my father, who left me a great legacy of love and the strength to overcome any situation. To my beloved mom, who has always been there, even in the distance. Finally, to my dear son, Juan Pablo, who makes me proud every day.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all my TESOL professors for their commitment and support throughout the completion of this master's degree. I want to thank Dr. Michelle Plaisance, especially for her always disposition, patience, professionalism, dedication, and commitment to helping me whenever I needed it during this thesis writing process. I also want to thank my tutor, Professor Colby, for her great disposition always to help me anytime I needed it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Learning to read and write is imperative to survive in this globalized and competitive world. Being literate is crucial to be prepared to excel in expectations when finding a job. Also, being literate is relevant to performing any job or daily activity. Education is the key to fighting poverty and ignorance. If a person wants to find a good job, he needs to be more than qualified. Besides, speaking another language is a plus many employers consider when hiring qualified people to perform a particular position. In the United States, many people from other countries perform well-paid jobs, and most have a different home language. Still, they also speak English, which is the target language in the country and the language of business. They are literate in their first and second language.

Due to globalization, English is one of the most spoken languages in the world. It is the second most spoken language in the world after Chinese. In the history of civilization is the lingua franca (Meyer, 2009). In many countries, it is the mother tongue. In some other countries, it is a second language because it has been established as the official language. English is the language used for business around the world. It is essential to comprehend how a language works in any context. That is why speaking a second language is an advantage in the professional and personal fields. Someone who speaks more than one language gets better job opportunities and knowledge about a different culture from the one he originally belonged to.

Many people come to the United States legally or illegally to live the American dream and give their children the best they can. In the United States, there are millions of immigrants. We, as parents, are the first ones to want our children to succeed personally and professionally. That

is why we always do and give our best to them. This is one of the reasons we as parents immigrate from our home countries to the United States to pursue a better life for our children, we as parents want our sons and daughters to be successful and safe.

However, parents are not the only ones that want their children to be successful. Undoubtedly, the school systems in The United States are also working to find the best way to help students (no matter their skin color, nationality, customs, culture, legal status, etc.), but they are still failing. In my own teaching experience as an ESL teacher at a Title I school in North Carolina Public Schools, I have seen how hard schools try to bridge the communication gap with parents who do not speak English. We have a multicultural school where the 40% of the school population comes from countries such as Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, and other Hispanic countries. 4% of the school population comes from Vietnam, and 2% comes from Yemen. To fulfill these families' needs, staff from the school assists parents who do not speak English with interpreters and label the school with words in other languages such as Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, etc. Still, sometimes it is not enough, and other language-speaking parents feel they are not considered in the school process. This is not all the school's fault but also the parent's circumstances. Most of them have long work schedules, both parents work, some other parents do not even have a ride to go to school if they do not work, and they miss the opportunity to know more about school processes, etc. Especially the effective way to help children at home with homework, sight words, or math problems when parents do not speak English.

I am going to speak about my own child's literacy experience. "In many countries, children are exposed to environmental print in the form of road signs, billboards, announcements in store windows, and magazines" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2017, p. 219). I remember I used to expose my child

to language and read books, magazines, flyers, etc., as much as possible. I have always liked reading, and I enjoyed it so much. I started reading children's stories to my baby when I was pregnant. When he was born, I started reading these books to him every time I was breastfeeding him or simply when he was about to fall asleep. Then, I always read to him. I labeled all the parts of the house and furniture with the names of the objects, and I covered the walls of his room with construction paper and gave him markers to trace, draw and write. We used to go out in our car reading every sign we saw during our long or short trips. Because of this reading routine, my child started developing his first language oral proficiency (Spanish) early, and the reading part was easier and faster for him. I used to talk to my child as much and as clearly as I could. I used to write things in front of him and ask questions to him, such as: What letter is this? What sound does this letter make? Etc. When we came to the United States in November 2018, my child was eight years old and already literate in his first language. The second language acquisition was easier and faster for him due to his ability to read and write in Spanish, his first language. He qualified for ESL services, and two years later, in January 2020, he took the ACCESS test and exited the ESL program with very high scores; he has gotten great results on the End of Grade tests for the past two years.

When children are literate in their first language, they bring skills, relevant knowledge, and essential notions or skills in reading and writing that they can transfer to English literacy. Indeed, some research and theories support the great benefit of teaching children to read and write in their home language before they are introduced to second language literacy, mainly because it is easier for them to read and write a language they already know. Those literacy skills are transferred to the English acquisition from the primary language, and English proficiency starts to develop. (Cummins, 1981; Peregoy, 1989; Tragar & Wong, 1984, as cited in Peregoy & Boyle, 2013).

After all this, I consider that families nurture early literacy skills in children by modeling the functions and the forms of the printing language to them through oral language, answering their questions, and asking them questions related to letters, sounds, or retelling the story they hear from adults, doing this, helps children to scaffold explicit instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2017). as I have done with my child since he was born.

My concern about the English learners' lack of English literacy skills and my desire to help my Spanish-speaking parents to contribute to their children's academic performance and growth made me create this project that consists of the implementation of some Spanish Reading skills workshops for the Hispanic parents at South Smithfield Elementary School. Hence, parents learn essential Spanish reading skills by creating a reading routine in their home language. These workshops will help the school English learners improve their English language Literacy by learning to read in their first language. These workshops will show parents how to create a reading routine that will help students develop their first language literacy and improve their second language literacy by listening to their parents reading in their home language and doing some activities to check their understanding. At the same time, these workshops will also help parents be more involved in their children's academic performance.

Each workshop will be sixty-minute every two weeks and will last two months. Parents and ESL teachers will gather to attend these activities. The workshops include readings that parents are familiar with and that exist in English. For example, "Dear Primo," "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding hood," etc. The ESL teachers will show parents that it can improve their English literacy at school with twenty minute-reading, comprehension questions towards the reading, retelling of the story, and knowledge of the Spanish alphabet. The workshops will be in Spanish for parents to understand what they must do.

As a result of these workshops, Hispanic parents may become more aware of their children's academic performance and gain confidence in helping their children to succeed academically even though they do not speak the target language just by contributing to their native language literacy acquisition. Through these workshops, parents will have enough tools to help their children improve their literacy struggles.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

With globalization in the XXI century, people worldwide must learn to read and write for communication purposes. An important invention of communication of this century is technology. The internet has become a very used communication tool. With the use of the internet, people can send instant written and voice messages through apps made for this purpose, “technological advances are changing the way we live and learn, from interactive internet to social networking sites to smartphones with built-in cameras and beyond” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013, p.4). Many people from different countries can use these apps to communicate with other countries, cultures, and foreign languages without knowing how to speak other languages because they have access to translators that pronounce the words and can be sent instantly. However, people must know how to read and write to communicate with each other (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013).

Peregoy and Boyle (2013) also mentioned that “communication has become available instantaneously worldwide. A dazzling array of information is available at the touch of a button” (p.4). On the other hand, the immigration issue has been an everlasting problem around the globe. They also stated that people leave their countries to look for a better life and job opportunities in more developed countries such as the United States, and many do not know how to speak the language. Still, they come to the United States to settle down and coexist with the new rules, values, and beliefs of a new culture different from theirs. They send their children to school to make their children become better people and great professionals with more life and job opportunities. (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013)

According to Vance (2008, as cited in Mendoza, 2017), English language learners are children whose first language is different from English and who need to learn English; those

students identified as any other language speaker at home in the home language verification home survey completed when enrolled in school. Indeed, caregiver and parent involvement are the keys to success in English learners' academic success. Because of the importance of multilingual learners' success, parents' role in their academic performance is essential to help them become prosperous and literate (Mendoza, 2017). Cook, Health, and Thompson (2000, as cited in Mendoza, 2017) mentioned that parents' and guardians' involvement and support are essential to building in their children a successful and robust literacy foundation in early childhood or elementary school, which remains in later grades. Besides, reading acquisition can be developed by oral language in everyday conversations, and parents or caregivers contribute to the phonological decoding support of their native language phonological decoding (Dethorne, Petrill, Schatschneider, & Cutting, 2010). Moreover, Kelley and Kohnert (2012, as cited in Mendoza, 2017) established that supporting English learners with their first language oral development of true cognates and their implementation will lead these children to use their native language to obtain the meaning of the word in the second language.

In this chapter, I examine research about the importance of parents' role in their children's reading second language acquisition by strengthening their first language reading routines that will provide their children with reading skills that will help them become literate in their second language. I provide reasons why parents should read to their children in their home language to help them become successful readers even if parents do not speak English, and how this will benefit their children in their second language reading improvement in the classrooms. I also discuss several studies that support parents and caregivers' importance in multilingual children's learning process. Additionally, I mention the benefits of the native language reading workshops for multilingual learners' monolingual parents, the importance of reuniting these

parents by providing them with reading strategies and tools they can use when reading to their children in their first language, and the relevance of how by creating a reading routine, their children will be successful in the second language reading.

The Importance of L1 and L2 Acquisition Relationship

Language acquisition is one of the human development's most fascinating and vital aspects (Avanika, Niroj, Ambalika, & Rajesh, 2009). According to Avanika et al. (2009), when babies are born, they usually make their first sounds, such as 'coos' and 'gurgles' sounds, and adults find these sounds pleasant to hear. As time passes, other subconscious aspects play an essential role in language development, such as metalinguistic, conscious, formal language teaching, and the acquisition of the written language system. These sounds can occur in both languages, L1 and L2. There are some language variables involved in the language acquisition process. These variations are phonology, morphology, vocabulary, paralinguistics, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse. Indeed, to succeed in cognitive functioning and the professional life of an individual, their first language acquisition must be developed in the early years (Avanika et al., 2009).

According to Deraskshan and Karimi (2005), the language that human beings acquire by the age of three is their first language or mother tongue, and second language acquisition is when the individuals need to speak another language that is helpful for education, employment, and communication purposes; most of the time, it is the official language of a particular society. Furthermore, when learning or acquiring a second language, age is an essential factor to consider; Harley (1986) and Lightbown and Spada (1999, as cited in Al Ghazali, 2006) argued that most linguists believe that childhood is the best time for creating simultaneous bilingual

children because of the plasticity and innocence of their brains. The brain has a superior ability when acquiring the early language unit sets. Moreover, Brown (1994) stated that

Children who acquire a second language after the age of five may have a physical advantage in that phonemic control of a second language is physically possible, yet that mysterious plasticity is still present. It is no wonder that children acquire authentic pronunciation while adults do not since pronunciation involves the control of so many muscles. (p. 51)

According to Brown's (1994) point of view, young, multilingual students can sound similar to their English native-speaker classmates' pronunciation and quickly become native speakers of the new language they are exposed to. Indeed, Brown also affirmed that "evidence indicates that persons beyond the age of puberty do not acquire what has come to be called authentic (native speaker) pronunciation of the second language" (Brown, 1994, p. 63). Besides, Halliday (1986) mentioned the importance of parents' input in their children's language learning success. He stated that children get tremendous feedback and language exposure from their parents. It is endless, constant, and variable input (Halliday, 1986). Indeed, children experience formal, informal, and colloquial forms of speech. Furthermore, when they begin to speak, they become more competent in using the language, the new skills gained, and the new levels of interaction increase (Halliday, 1986). At the same time, they develop different storage and retrieval capacities. Halliday (1986) also argued that children could acquire the culture simultaneously as well as acquire language due to the language that they are exposed to since birth is contextual and wrapped in a cultural form because when human beings learn or acquire a language, they also learn or acquire the culture of the target language. Furthermore, they are

surrounded by text, and there is always a constant meaning exchange in which they are always involved when interacting (Halliday, 1986).

The Importance of Reading and the Human Brain

Wolf and Stoodley (2010) stated that humans were not made to read and write. Human beings invented reading a thousand years ago. This invention rearranged the human brain organization, which expanded how they were able to think and transformed the intellectual evolution of the species. It means that people must have had to express themselves in another form rather than speaking (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). In the past, they needed to record information about their businesses and travels, and looking for a solution to this issue led them to create a secure way to record all they needed to know. However, all this was possible due to the extraordinary plasticity power that the human brain must build new connections among the structures that already existed and allow it to have the ability to shape itself through experiences (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). As a result, it is not easy to believe that the brain was not designed for reading purposes, but when a significant need arises, it can adapt to the situation and improve it. This is closely related to human intellectual evolution. It is also essential to understand how reading has evolved in history, how children acquire it, and how the brain is biologically restructured when reading takes place. Some neurons create connections among themselves every time a new skill is acquired. Indeed, the human brain design can modify itself; in other words, we are born with the ability to change what we were given by nature and go beyond (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). They also stated that “reading can be learned only because of the brain’s plastic design, and when reading takes place, that individual brain is forever changed,

both physically and intellectually” (p. 5). In other words, reading modifies the brain’s structure forever.

On the other hand, Leonard (2001) said that language is a product of the human brain. She affirmed that it has evolved as the species evolve as well to help human beings adapt to the environment. She also confirmed that because of human beings' brain structure, they are the only specie that uses symbols arbitrarily to communicate about the past, the present, and the future. The difference relies on the brain structure and the opportunities to practice or allow stimulation. The cortical size of the brain in some human beings is significantly more extensive and more developed in sensory receptors, auditory processing, and visual processing than in others. It means that some functions are easier to learn, which is why many are skilled people worldwide and makes some things or activities easy to perform (Leonard, 2001).

Still, it does not mean that if human beings are exposed to a learning environment, they will not learn. Individuals with a more developed neurobiological aptitude are more likely to look for opportunities to exercise that aptitude, regardless of the opportunities at home (Leonard, 2001). In other words, Leonard (2001) also affirmed that children with large cortical areas for auditory processing and visual word form have more advantages in processing language and written text. Reading will be developed and facilitated if these children are exposed to an environment full of learning opportunities (Leonard, 2001). But this does not mean that individuals whose brain cortical, auditory, and visual processing development is not more extensive and more developed will not learn. Parents and teachers must work hard to help students develop reading skills and provide a high-quality learning environment with many language opportunities and high-quality literacy experiences; then, special education and remediation will not be necessary (Leonard, 2001).

Additionally, the brain needs to be exposed to sounds as much as possible to develop reading (Goswami, 2008). Children must be exposed to the spoken language from a very young age. Parents and caregivers must talk to their children as much as possible. The brain must recognize and represent all the sound elements in a word and develop the articulatory and semantic information (Goswami, 2008). Moreover, Goswami (2008) also stated that articulating and producing sounds are essential to phonological system development.

Learning to read and write positively affects the organization of the adult brain, and the level of education has proven to have an essential impact on the cerebral organization of cognitive skills and neuropsychological performance. In a case study by Castro Caldas in 1976 (as cited in Solis, 2004), the authors discussed how schooling introduces numerous changes in brain functioning because it increases abstract thinking and the parallel processing of information development. Additionally, the specific learning skills and operations taught at school lead to the mastery of reading and writing, which are developed in particular brain areas. Indeed, the knowledge of reading and writing involves several cognitive processes, which include visual and audio-visual processing and interhemispheric crossing of information. (Solis, 2004)

The Importance of Parents Reading at Home.

“Caregiver involvement is important for every child’s education: it is especially important for the child whose family is from a different linguistic background” (Van Voohis et al., 2003, p. 2). Children’s teachers might guide parents and caregivers on how to conduct early learning experiences at home. Research suggests that, regardless of economic circumstances, parents should perform reading readiness activities with their children at home, but many parents feel unsure about the best way to engage their kids in reading-related activities. Even more,

parents are uncertain about how to interact with their children in math activities (Pan, Gauvain, Liu, & Cheng, 2006), specially when how it is taught in a child's school differs from how it was taught when the parents were in school.

Reading to children at an early age helps them develop reading skills when they get to school. This helps them incorporate the written language into the brain's universal reading system, and parents can incorporate the spoken language when they talk to children as much as possible. Reading to children also stimulates their imagination (Wolf, Stoodley, 2010). Also, "[a]s soon as an infant can sit on a caregiver's lap, the child can learn to associate the act of reading with a sense of being loved." (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010, p. 82). Additionally, research has shown that the more parents read to their children and the children listen, the better they will develop a good reading level (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). Research also shows that when parents read to children, they associate the pictures with what they are told, contributing to their reading development (Wolf, & Stoodley, 2010).

When children are familiarized with written language, the ones in the books that they are read to, they start to develop some visual detail awareness of printed language. According to Wolf and Stoodley (2010),

one aspect of print awareness begins with the discovery that printed words go in a particular direction: for example, in English and European languages from left to right; in Hebrew and Aramic languages from right to left; and in several Asian scripts from top to bottom. (p.90)

These lines become so familiar to children that they can identify them everywhere, in advertisements and magazines, and it does not matter the shape, color, etcetera (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010).

Learning to read and write is connected to oral language because when parents read early to their children, children discover that printed letters become words and represent spoken words; they also begin to discern that those spoken words are made of sounds (letters) (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). As a result, children begin to make connections between oral and written language, and when they begin to recognize letters, they relate those letters with the sounds they make when they produce the sounds while speaking (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). Wolf and Stoodley (2010) also affirmed that “next, letters begin to show off children’s evolving concept of print, mainly the letters in their own names. Gradually, other letters capture how children think words are spelled, with many a letter name used, let us say, ingeniously” (p. 97). They also stated that “children with a rich repertoire of words and their associations will experience any text or any conversation in ways that are substantially different from children who do not have the same store words and concepts” (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010, p.9). It can be affirmed that the richness of children learning to read is due to the stimulation parents provide at home.

Parents play a crucial role in their children’s academic success, and English learners’ parents are not the exception. Darling (2008, as cited in Wei & Zhou, 2012) stated that involving parents in their children’s second language literacy process is an urgent requirement to close the gap between language minority students (English learners) and their native-speaker classmates. August et al. (2008) and Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, and Francis (2005, as cited in Wei & Zhou, 2012) also mentioned that there are many reasons why it is vital to encourage parents to be involved in their children’s second language acquisition process. First, they have the advantage of speaking their children’s home language during school activities and exercises; and second, if the specific teaching exercise allows using the learners’ home language, it is better than using only the target language (English) in the English learners’ instruction.

According to Gaitan (2012), research has shown that parent involvement in children's academic achievement is imperative. Building relationships between parents and the school community is of great importance. When parents are engaged in their kids' learning experiences, student achievement improves. There is evidence of the relationship between parent involvement and student academic gain. In a case study by Saks (2000, cited in Gaitan, 2012), "where 15 schools participated, the National School Boards Association found that where parent and school partnerships existed, student achievement improved significantly" (p. 306). Additionally, parents' ability to participate in school activities and the community also expanded cultural knowledge collectively (Saks, 2000, as cited in Gaitan, 2012). In fact, it is an exchange of power; by learning the school language, parents are empowered, and schools also win because they build and maintain a solid communication system with families (Gaitan, 2001).

Helping English language learners improve their literacy and academic performance is challenging for school systems. Hamre and Pianta (2005, as cited in Niehaus & Adelson, 2014) stated that classrooms and school environments are essential to students' behavioral and academic success. As the ELL population has risen in recent years, attention has been drawn to the socio-emotional and academic difficulties these students may encounter. According to Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008), many ELLs face various stressful challenges and conditions such as immigration, family separations, poverty, cultural conflicts between school and home, etcetera., that place them at lower levels of academic achievement compared to their English Proficient classmates (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). These authors also show the importance of additional support for the English language learner population. It is essential to fulfilling not only the English learners' needs but also their family's needs by involving them appropriately in the school educational process. Indeed, Pelletier and Brent (2002) affirmed that many English

learners' parents might not have had the opportunity to receive formal education at a school. Therefore, they also find it difficult, frustrating, and struggling to help their children with schooling. (Pelletier & Brent, 2002)

On the other hand, the multilingual, or English language learner population, has increased tremendously in the United States and continues to grow every day; the fact that this is the fastest-increasing number of students left behind is the most significant concern for early childhood education nationwide. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2005, as cited in Mays, 2008), "the number of school-age children (ages 5-17) who spoke a language other than English at home grew from 3.8 million to 9.9 million between 1979 and 2003--gains representing 9-19% of all children in that age group" (p. 415). Indeed, researchers have predicted that the U.S. school population will be individuals that belong to other ethnic, language, and socioeconomic groups in the future (Mays, 2008).

The Importance of Coaches in Training English Learners' Teachers.

Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 requires public schools to help English learners "participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs" [...] With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title III established with federal formula grants for states to support the needs of English learner students aged 3-21, with the goal of helping them attain English language proficiency (Barrow & Markman-Pitters, 2016, p. 160).

The passage above shows that it is essential to recognize that parents play an important role in children's literacy development and school districts, instructors, and coaches play their part in this process as well. According to Walker et al. (2010), successful professional

development activities and engaging practices make teachers become more effective and more culturally aware because they can have the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and students' values, beliefs, and behaviors. Literacy, curriculum coaches, and Multilingual learners' specialists can also help teachers and instructors with mastering instructional strategies, achieving student outcomes positively, and enhancing teachers' conceptual understanding and the effectiveness of their practices.

Helping students achieve their reading goals is an important action for teachers and instructors, especially for ELLs. The instruction for them requires linguistically and culturally diverse qualities. Teachers, instructors, and coaches must identify students' cultural background knowledge. By knowing students' backgrounds, teachers can base their instruction. In the case of English language learners, their first language plays an important role and can be an advantage in supporting second language learning. (Walker et al., 2010)

A review of the education literature contributed by Henderson and Mapp (2002, as cited in Chadwick, 2003) affirmed that family and community members' involvement has a significant impact on student achievement. Many involved parents and school community members mean many more adults who work together to educate children both within and outside the classroom to find the best approaches to adequate the need for funding and school accountability (Chadwick, 2003).

It is essential to mention that teachers, curriculum coaches, ESL instructors, administrators, and the whole school community keep in mind how important it is to be open-minded and understand that English learners' background knowledge and their first language knowledge are relevant when it comes to acquiring a second language (Chadwick, 2003). When multilingual students come to school, they bring richness from their homes and their home

languages, which helps them learn content using their background knowledge as a base (Chadwick, 2003). On the other hand, from a neurophysiological perspective, language is a complex function. It is believed that it works as software that runs on the brain's hardware, changing the brain's structure and function when individuals learn to read (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2002, as cited in Chadwick, 2003).

Additionally, “[k]nowledge of more than one language and culture is advantageous for all students” (TESOL, 1997, as cited in Short et al., 2018, p.5). In fact, the Commission on Language Learning (2017, also cited in Short et al., 2018) mentioned that effective education in the XXI century suggests that school communities learn about other cultures and learn new languages. Besides, TESOL (1997) mentioned that having the opportunity to speak more than one language has individual and collective benefits because it is essential to understand different perspectives, life experiences, and world views which enrich and build more intercultural competent people (Short et al., 2018). It is also necessary that teachers and instructors reflect on their teaching and cooperate to find ideas and activities that include and consider the variety of cultures and allow them to use their first language as a tool. In this way, students feel they are validated and included in the development of the classes. This action shows them that no matter the lack of knowledge they have in the second language, their knowledge and their roots are considered, and from this point, they have the motivation to acquire the second language (Short et al., 2018).

On the other hand, it is also relevant for teachers and instructors to be trained in ELL strategies. Professional development reviews have shown that teachers who work with multilingual or language learners found that hands-on activities in teaching English learners are readily applicable in their classrooms (Calderon et al., 2011). Class demonstrations with their

colleagues' multilingual students help them improve their instruction with the English language learners in association with personalized coaching (Calderon et al., 2011). In other words, ESL instructors and curriculum coaches can work collaboratively with classroom teachers by having class and activity demonstrations using modified instruction to show how to prepare appropriate lessons for multilingual students (Calderon et al., 2011).

Additionally, Yoon (2008, as cited in Hoover et al., 2016) found a strong connection between teachers' past personal and professional experiences and how these cultural experiences helped English learners position themselves to learn. This positioning or way to be in their students' shoes and understand how they feel and learn, is also dependent on how well teachers understand English learners' cultural and linguistic identity and background knowledge and how they actively promote their language learning engagement through interactive teaching experiences (Hoover et al., 2016). Thus, Yoon (2008, as cited in Hoover et al., 2016) affirmed that

One important conclusion from this research is that teachers who had culturally responsive practice and preparation in schools tended to provide instructional methods that improved English learner engagement and motivation, a type of preparation all educators in today's diverse classroom should strive to achieve (p.11)

Therefore, the need to create a culturally responsive collaborative learning environment provides teachers with a joint action to meet the needs of English learners. It is also the opportunity to change minds and adopt effective processes within a school culture that supports all English learners' academic success. Also, teachers must believe they have the power to influence what is important and valued in the school organization. In this way, teachers and administrators will have the same goals in the cultural environment creation for English learners'

benefit. By creating a cultural environment, English learners will feel more included and less marginalized because they will feel that they make part of a community that understands and fulfills their needs (Honigsfeld and Dove, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, parents' involvement in creating a reading environment and routine with children helps them develop their language and literacy skills. In this case, it is vital that speaking parents of other languages who live in the United States, where the predominant language is English, start reading to their children in their first language and create a reading routine with them that prepares their brains for the reading development and avoids struggles in the acquisition of the second language literacy skills; strengthen and improve their vocabulary in the second language by using their first language as support. Moreover, having a reading routine in their first language can also avoid speech issues in their first language and those transference issues to the second language.

On the other hand, curriculum coaches and ESL instructors must support classroom teachers with meaningful professional development opportunities that help them become more linguistically and culturally aware. It is also necessary that teachers and instructors understand the importance of preparing meaningful practices rich in cultural and linguistic features that validate the previous knowledge ELLs may bring to the classrooms and allow them to base their knowledge during the acquisition of the second language.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale for how providing parents with a reading routine in their first language can help improve the reading acquisition of the second language. A series of synchronous face-to-face workshops for parents of multicultural students will teach parents first language reading tools, strategies, and reading skills that they can use at home to help their children develop a reading routine in their first language; and at the same time, this routine will also improve second language literacy. Indeed, research has shown that when parents are engaged in their children's learning activities at home, children are provided with basic needs. If schools communicate constantly and accurately with them, parents' involvement can mitigate the negative impacts of poverty and prevent students from dropping out (Clark, 1983, 1987; Dorbusch & Ritter, 1988; Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1996; Kellaghan et al., 1993, as cited in Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

In fact, parents' involvement in their children's early literacy journey at home starts with parents introducing reading skills and establishing a reading routine in their first language, which may lead multilingual children to succeed when learning to read and write at school in the target language. There is relevant evidence that suggests that the problems multilingual children face in learning to read during their elementary school years and beyond are closely related to the preliteracy skills students bring from home when they start school in Pre-kindergarten or Kindergarten (Lonigan, 2006; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994, as cited in Farver, Lonigan & Eppe, 2009). And it is essential to show parents specific ideas on how they can help their children at home in order to improve their children's reading skills in their first language. Research has also shown that there are three critical skills in the preschool and Kindergarten period that are early school-age reading

ability predictors; these crucial skills are phonological awareness (sounds, rhyming, sound manipulation), print knowledge (identification letter, and basic print concept understanding), and oral language (grammar and vocabulary) (Lonigan, 2006; Lonigan, Burgess, Anthony, & Barker, 1998; Lonigan, Schatschneider, & Westberg, 2007, as cited in Farver, Lonigan, & Epp, 2009). In other words, if multilingual children's parents are supported in developing these skills mentioned above in their children, these will lead the children to have more tremendous literacy success.

Parents have great expectations for their children's academic success and school progress. Thus, it is relevant to highlight that this parent community is often interested but has not been given the necessary resources to advocate for their children and encourage them at home. To bridge this gap between schools and parents, schools must communicate effectively with parents. But Gonzales and Gabel (2017) stated that "teachers lack critical information about CLD parents and diverse representations of parental involvement, they may also lack the training needed to work effectively with CLD students" (p. 67).

Schools and teachers can improve multilingual learners' parents' academic involvement by creating literacy environments such as literacy workshops, asking parents to volunteer to come and read a small passage in their home language, and inviting them to volunteer for two-hour school activities that involve reading in the classrooms. By including parents in their children's literacy development, multilingual learners will have plenty of opportunities to achieve academic success. Indeed, Kim et al. (2020) suggested that:

Students-mostly children of immigrant families-with high family orientation (focusing on family respect) perceived their school climate more positively through feeling respected and valued by the school, which was consequently associated with greater academic motivation (p. 47).

Parental involvement is essential for multilingual students to improve their second language literacy and the first step to doing this is by strengthening their first language literacy, which can help them succeed at school. The most crucial action is to generate opportunities for parents to become actively involved in school literacy activities by creating opportunities for parents to be trained in first-language literacy strategies to make their children become better second-language readers and by motivating parents to be more involved in school academic activities and activities in general.

Chapter 4: Project

This project is a series of workshops to increase parental involvement to improve multilingual children's second language literacy. The workshops will help families create a reading routine in their home language. These workshops will be held at South Smithfield Elementary School in Smithfield, North Carolina. Moreover, this project will also teach parents some first-language literacy skills to create a reading routine that helps improve their children's academic performance in second-language literacy.

This project's name is "Talleres de Lectura para padres de Familia." These workshops will offer parents face-to-face sessions with the ESL teachers and provide them with strategies and tools to help their kids read in their home language.

Session One: The Importance of Reading

In this session, parents will receive an introductory presentation about the importance of reading to build literacy in their children and how this leads them to academic success. This session will give parents enough information to make them conscious of their vital role in their children's literacy development.

Session One will be held at the media center of South Smithfield Elementary School in Smithfield, NC. Parents will be welcomed and accompanied by the ESL school teachers. The session will be in Spanish with a series of google slides to introduce the workshop topics to the participants. Figure 1.1 shows the home slide. It portrays the workshop title "Talleres de Lectura para Padres de Familia" and the question. 'How can I help my child improve their English reading if I speak Spanish?



Figure 1.1 Home slide

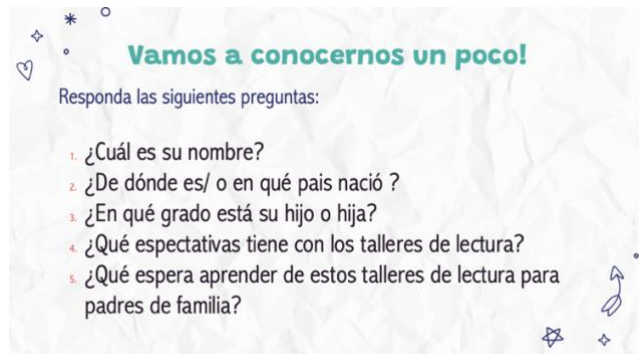


Figure 1.2: Introductory slide.

The introductory slide is an ice breaker for parents with “Let us meet each other” as a title. It contains five questions. The questions are in their home language, in this case, Spanish, and they mean the following: What is your name? Where are you from? What grade is your child in? What expectations do you have for the Literacy workshops? Finally, what do you expect to learn from these workshops?



Figure 1.3: Objectives of Parent Workshops

This slide portrays the three main objectives for these parents' workshops. The first objective is to learn and create a reading space and routine to help our children read in their home language. The second objective is to create strong love bonds while strengthening our children's reading skills. Moreover, the final aim is to strengthen the second language reading by developing reading skills in their home language. It is important to mention that parents have an essential role in their children's literacy journey and can help their children become literate in the second language (English) by developing literacy in their home language.



Figure 1.4: Agenda

This slide is the agenda. This slide provides a general explanation of the four workshop sessions. Figure 1.4 shows a brief explanation of the four workshops that parents will attend. Each workshop will last 60 minutes. The first workshop is about learning to read and why their role as parents is essential. The second workshop is about how vital it is to create a daily reading routine with their children that helps them create a love bond and develop reading skills. The third workshop is about tips to use with children while reading. Parents are given some reading techniques they can use with their children to help them develop literacy in their home language. The fourth and last slide concerns using materials and activities when reading to children.



Figure 1.5: Let us learn the importance of learning to read

Figure 1.5 shows the beginning slide of the first session workshop; it mentions the importance of learning to read. It is an invitation for parents not to limit themselves because they do not know how to speak, read, and write in the target language. Parents can teach their children what they already know, which is their home language.



Figure 1.6: Famous Person quote

This slide shows a quote from Antony Ballester, a famous author who states, "Get your kids used to reading because a child that reads is an adult that thinks." The idea of the quote is to make parents conscious of the importance of helping their children's academic performance even though they do not speak the target language. They can help their children be successful by helping them become literate in their first language.



Figure 1.7: Why is it essential that children learn to read?

In this slide, parents can observe why it is essential that children learn to read in their first language. Children need to know how to read because they improve their language, strengthen their concentration, and become more creative as they learn to read. Additionally, reading in

their first language helps them use it as a platform for their second language literacy because, according to Kelley and Kohnert (2012, as cited in Mendoza, 2017), parents can support English learners with their first language oral development of true cognates and their implementation will lead these children to use their native language to obtain the meaning of the word in the second language.



Figure 1.8: How to Start

This slide shows parents how to help their children build literacy in their first language. It starts with the first phase, creating a 20-minute daily reading routine that can be followed from Monday to Friday. Then, the second phase is to teach kids the vowels and consonants and their sounds in their home language. The third phase is to ask comprehension questions after reading the book. It is always a good idea to ask children to change the end of the story. This exercise helps their memory and imagination.

Session Two: Reading Daily



Figure 2.1: Daily Reading

This slide is the beginning of session 2. This slide introduces the importance of creating a daily reading routine at home.

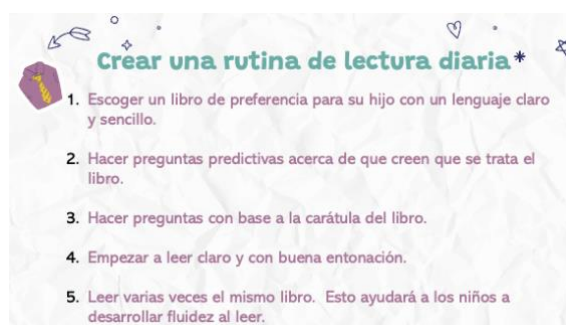


Figure 2.2: Creating a Daily Reading Routine

Learning to read and write is connected to oral language because when parents read to their children, children discover that printed letters become words, and those words are made of letters, and those letters are made of sounds (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010). Children start making connections between oral and written language, and when they recognize letters, they relate those letters with the sounds they make (Wolf & Stoodley, 2010).

This slide portrays the creation of a daily reading routine by following some simple and relevant steps. Parents will need to be consistent in following the steps. The first step is to pick a book with their children, a book of their child's preference. In the second step, parents must

ask predictive questions before starting the reading. Those predictive questions will help children use their imagination and rationale to guess what the book is about. The third step is to make questions based on the book cover. Allow children to use their imagination and their oral language. The fourth step is reading the book with good intonation and pace. Finally, this book can be read many times to help children improve their memory and develop fluency.



Figure 2.3: Helpful Websites

The internet is a comprehensive source of information where parents can find Spanish-reading websites they can use at home with their children from an iPad, tablet, or cellphone. Muchoscuentos.com and Epic.com are reading sites that contain a great variety of Spanish stories to be read.

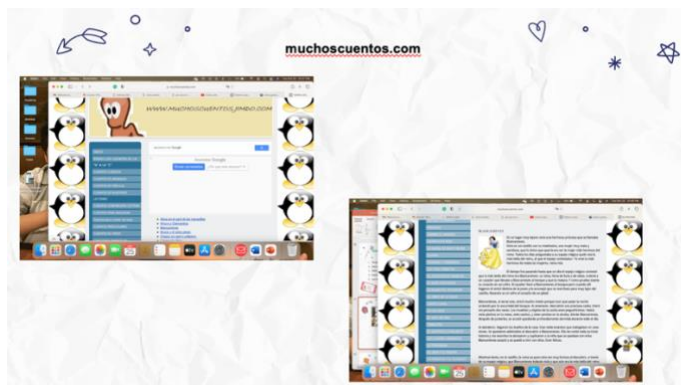


Figure 2.4: Muchoscuentos.com Website

Muchoscuentos.com is a website where parents can find free online Spanish books they can read to their children. This website also has pictures that can lead children to predict and develop oral language skills and creativity through the description of these pictures.

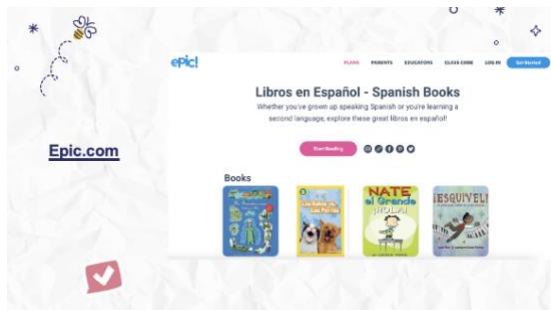


Figure 2.5: Epic.com Website.

Epic.com is a website where parents can find free online Spanish books they can read to their children.



Figure 2.6: Demonstration

This slide shows a reading routine demonstration that will be useful for parents to see how they can create a friendly environment and daily routine with their children while they enjoy

and learn to read. This small lesson shows parents how to follow some simple steps. The first step is picking a book their children like; the second is making predictable questions based on the book cover; the third step is asking comprehension questions after reading; and the last step is doing a small activity like coloring, writing, or simply tapping out words or recognizing letters.

Session Three: Reading Tips



Figure 3.1: Reading tips for children

This slide is the beginning of session 3. This slide introduces handy reading tips for parents to read with their children.

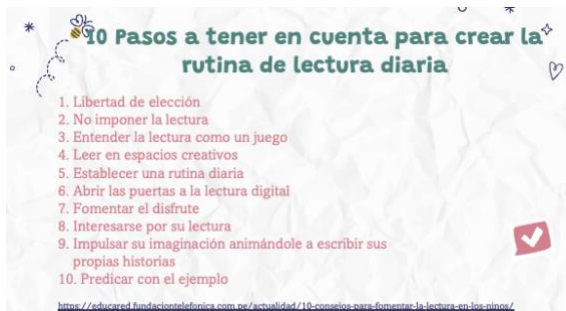


Figure 3.2: Ten Helpful Reading Tips

This slide includes ten helpful reading tips for parents to teach their children to love reading. First, they can give children the freedom to pick a book they like. Then, they must not force children to read; parents must find an exciting way to entice children to read. Third, parents need to introduce reading as a fun activity. Fourth, it is essential to find creative environments for reading. Fifth, and the most relevant, is to create a daily reading routine. Later, it is also interesting to open the door to online and digital reading. The use of technology is exciting for children. Sixth, make reading enjoyable. Seventh, make it interesting. Then after reading, parents can stimulate their children's imagination by encouraging them to draw and write their own stories. Moreover, the last and essential step is to teach them by example.



Figure 3.3: Examples of Reading Tips.

This slide gives two relevant examples to help children build literacy. A twenty-minute daily routine can help children develop reading skills.



Figure 3.4: Teaching by Example

This slide elicits the importance of encouraging kids to write their own stories to develop their imagination. Also, it remarks on the importance of parents teaching their children reading by reading modeling.



Figure 3.5: The Importance of Reading video

This slide shows parents a three-minute video explaining the importance of reading to children.

Session Four: The Use of Materials



Figure 4.1: Useful materials

This slide is the beginning of session 4. This slide introduces the use of materials in children's daily reading routine with their parents.

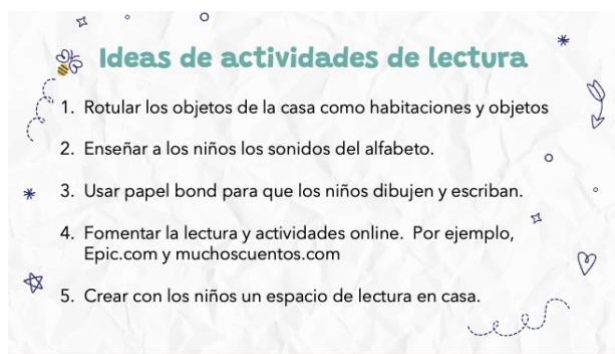


Figure 4.2: Ideas for reading activities

Session four, and the last session, is about the different activities parents can use to teach children to acquire literacy in their home language. The first activity is to label all the important places and objects inside their homes with their names. It is recommended that parents read these words every day with their children. Also, it is recommended that parents teach children the letters and the sounds of the alphabet in Spanish. Many online aids can help them with this

purpose, aids, such as YouTube videos and printable activities. Moreover, some websites help with building literacy in Spanish. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to use construction or craft paper as wallpaper at home to stimulate children's imagination.



Figure 4.3: Labeling objects at home

Labeling objects and spaces at home help children develop literacy. This slide shows parents how to label all big things and places at home and practice reading with children daily.



Figure 4.4: YouTube Alphabet videos

This slide shows parents examples of YouTube videos teaching children the Spanish alphabet and vowel sounds.



Figure 4.5: Hands-on activities

Children need to be an active part of learning. That is why it is recommended that parents allow children to use construction or craft paper to draw and write. These activities help children's imagination development.



Figure 4.6: Promote Online Reading activities

Epic.com and muchoscuentos.com are websites that promote Spanish readings that can help parents with literacy. They also have exciting activities for children after reading the short stories or books.



Figure 4.7: At-Home Reading environments

This slide shows parents how to create an appropriate reading environment for their children at home. A reading space at home is essential because they can read calmly and quietly without interruptions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Learning to read is imperative if we want to keep up with all the inventions and technological advances in the XXI century, where communication is the primary means of world connection. Thanks to technology, communication has become more accessible, faster, and broader. Now, it is easy to visit a country by only hitting a button on your technological device (PC, iPad, tablet, cellphone). You do not need to travel to foreign countries to interact and speak with people whose languages are not your mother tongue. And still, you can communicate with them thanks to technology and your reading and writing skills.

Being literate opens many doors to terrific job opportunities. But being literate in two or more languages is a more significant professional and personal advantage that opens many doors that nobody can close. The chances of being bilingual are more comprehensive because speaking a second language will always be a professional advantage and privilege. But being literate in two or more languages is like hitting the jackpot.

Without noticing how vital it is for an English learner to be literate in his first language, I created a literacy-rich environment for my child from birth. I taught him reading notions and skills in our home language; when coming to the United States, I saw the success of his second language acquisition process without knowing why he was so successful at school while being an English learner. Thanks to my dedication at home, I made him literate in his first language without knowing that years later, as a TESOL master student, I was about to discover that all the time I invested in helping my child to become literate in our home language would lead him to be a successful English learner and become literate in the second language (English) as well.

Through this research, I came to understand how important it is for people to learn to read and write. We live in a very competitive society, and reading makes a huge difference when communicating because reading is an interpretation of the world using symbols. Being bilingual and literate in two or more languages offers more and better personal and professional opportunities.

I also learned through this research that we, as parents are our children's first teachers; we are their teachers at home and the first models to follow. That is why we need to take advantage of our vital role in their lives and start using it as a great tool to help them become academically successful because this will lead them to be better citizens of the world. Understandably, many immigrant parents in the United States do not speak English, but they speak their native language, and the majority are literate. This is the opportunity to help build a stronger love bond with the children and help them become literate in their first language by creating a reading routine with their children, choosing exciting books for children with pictures they can interpret, and discussing with parents about it. Helping children develop literacy in their first language will lead them to become literate in the second language (English) because they can use their home language and background knowledge as a platform to become literate in English.

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